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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Background of the Canning Industry.

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1. Prior to World War I, only limited luxury items were to be found in the form of canned foods in the USSR; these were dainty fish, sardines and the like, generally imported [redacted] as the USSR at that time had no canning industry of its own. After 1921, however, technical help from Western Europe was enlisted, and a number of small canning factories sprang up in the Vladivostok region and the Siberian Ice-Ocean shores. These were run by slave labor, since machinery was too expensive, and canned exclusively fish, crabs, lobster and caviar for civilian consumption, although canned shark, seal and whale meat was prepared for the army.
2. Another group of canning factories sprang up, following 1921, near Leningrad, producing canned sardines and Baltic fish, exclusively for export. In the Caucasus, fruits and preserves were canned, while vegetables and fish were canned along the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, all in limited quantity. [redacted]
3. [redacted] the first experiments on the canning of milk. First attempts, on sugared milk, were successful. Milk was evaporated to half its volume, then large amounts of sugar were added as a conservant; it was then pasteurized at a low temperature, 65° - 70° Centigrade, so as not to destroy the vitamins by overheating. The heating lasted for two hours; cans were soldered beforehand, and it was a one-step sterilization process.
4. As far as vegetables were concerned, beans with a tomato sauce were the most frequently prepared; these were sterilized by heating for one hour at 70° Centigrade, then rapidly cooled and kept for several hours in a cold state so that remaining spores would pass into active form, then reheated once more for one hour. In 1939, canning factories started high temperature processes after several

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serious incidents of mass poisoning (botulism) occurred in Kiev alone, over three hundred persons perished in one night from vegetables canned in Odessa. The same tragedy resulted from foods canned in the Kherson factory.

5. Tin for cans was costly, and since the USSR had very little tin of its own, it was decided to add lead to tin in 1939; this again resulted in mass poisoning due to excessive lead in the alloy and the fact that cans were allowed to stand too long before being filled in the factories.

6.

canned, sugared milk, a thick soup-like, yellowish-colored mass to which boiling water was added. This was very popular among children, who ate it as one would candy. Prior to World War II, the USSR began purchasing autoclaves and machinery for cleaning fruits and vegetables in the interest of increasing their canning efficiency, which was still done mostly by hand at that time. In 1939, an attempt was made by Soviet canners to coat their cans with a plastic varnish, as the Germans did, but the varnish did not adhere, nor was it resistant to the action of the canned stuffs. In 1939-1940 glass containers were introduced; these were heavy and breakable but were popular in that people bought foods for the sake of the glass jars, since glassware was a rare commodity in the USSR. Fish, such as marinated herring, was often found in these glass jars.

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7. An unpleasant feature in Soviet canning was the fact that sardine oil was prepared from petrol. By distillation, a transparent, liquid, tasteless paraffin oil named "solar-oil" was obtained from the petrol, to which five percent of sunflower oil was added for taste and smell. Another even worse feature was the use of salicylic acid for canning fruits; although a good disinfectant, it acted adversely on the stomach and bowels of those unfortunate enough to eat same.

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8. In World War II, the Soviet army depended exclusively on canned foods. Even up to 1941 canned foods were considered luxury items, and found principally in restaurants frequented by high party members. For the most part, food was smoked, cured and dried for preservation.
9. Most of the canning plants in the USSR in 1941 were small; they were generally named after the city in which they existed, and given a number, such as "(town name) Canning Plant, Number Eight". Also, they were all under military control by 1941.

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